



LERROY D. BACA, SHERIFF

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December 30, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**RESPONSE TO THE MERRICK J. BOBB SPECIAL REPORT  
ON THE FIVE INMATE DEATHS**

On December 14, 2004, your Board requested the Department to respond to the Merrick J. Bobb Special Report on the five inmate deaths. The report identified 21 recommendations, many of which we had already identified and considered prior to this report.

In response to concerns raised by recent jail homicides, I have assessed and implemented numerous changes to the policies, procedures, and business practices of the jail system. These include inmate classification, housing, and general facility security. Attached are the responses to Mr. Bobb's recommendations.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me, at (323) 526-5000 or Chief Charles Jackson, Correctional Services Division, at (213) 893-5017.

Sincerely,

  
LERROY D. BACA  
SHERIFF

*A Tradition of Service*

## **RESPONSE TO THE MERRICK J. BOBB SPECIAL REPORT**

### **COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES - SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**

#### **FIVE INMATE DEATHS**

The purpose of this document is to address the findings and recommendations of the November 2004, Los Angeles County Jail - A Review Following Five Inmate Homicides, prepared by Special Counsel Merrick J. Bobb and staff. The following paragraphs will respond to each of these recommendations. For your convenience, this response follows the format in which Mr. Bobb prepared the recommendations.

#### **I. Classification and Housing**

##### **A. Create a centralized classification and housing bureau.**

Response: Currently, the Los Angeles County jail system is comprised of seven separate facilities, including Mira Loma (a federally contracted facility). The Inmate Reception Center (IRC) is responsible for the processing of all incoming and released County jail inmates. This process includes initial medical screening and classification and allows IRC to maintain significant control of the inmate population and housing plans for each facility.

Due to the enormity of the jail system, the various facilities need the ability to individually manage their populations independent of the suggested central oversight command. Given the physical distances between many of our jails, it is critical that our individual facilities maintain control of their inmate populations given a variety of variables such as integrating inmate security levels with inmate demographics and ensuring inmate safety. The facilities currently have an effective working relationship with IRC to maintain system-wide control of the inmate population. This relationship allows IRC to place incoming inmates at compatible facilities while allowing the individual facility to appropriately place and house the inmates. While IRC controls most of the classification process, we are currently upgrading our classification software systems to allow for direct input from outlying facilities. These software enhancements will allow for timely updates to inmate classification information thus increasing our ability to comprehensively and accurately track our inmate population. Once the upgrades are operational, we believe this will adequately address the concerns identified.

##### **B. Create a comprehensive classification plan.**

Response: Our Department purchased and began the implementation of the Northpointe classification system in 2001. Unfortunately, before we

could fully implement Northpointe, the County of Los Angeles began experiencing budget shortfalls. As a result, we had to significantly curtail Correctional Services and Custody Operations Divisions' ability to complete the implementation. The lack of available bed space continues to hamper these efforts. It is our intention to fully implement Northpointe after a reassessment of the definition of security levels and the reopening of the closed Custody Division facilities. A better investment would be to fully fund the development of the Jail Inmate Management System (JIMS). After full integration with Northpointe, this combined system would provide a comprehensive classification and housing system. It will also include the necessary technology to manage the inmate population across the large physical distances between our facilities. JIMS is expected to be implemented in three phases. Although parts of the first phase have been implemented, funding for the rest of phase one and the next two phases has not yet been appropriated by your Board.

- C. Create a functional operations manual governing classification and housing assignments.

Response: With the full implementation of JIMS and Northpointe, a functional manual regarding classification and housing assignments will be created. Currently, IRC maintains a unit order manual, which includes detailed policy and procedures regarding the classification of inmates.

- D. Maintain distinct housing for separate security levels.

Response: In theory, this recommendation is plausible; however, given the constraints of managing a fluctuating jail population between 18,000 and 23,000 inmates, jail beds are a premium. Our ability to identify a row or an entire module/dorm for a specific security level would drastically reduce our ability to maximize the use of most beds. It is necessary to combine security levels based on inmate demographics, special handles, and other variables.

- E. Establish and enforce custody boundaries for separate security levels.

Response: It is our goal to obtain sufficient bed space, resources, and staff to provide more housing options while segregating security classification levels. These goals require funding. Given the variety of jail infrastructures and philosophies found in Los Angeles County - dormitory, modular, linear, direct supervision, etc. - each facility command needs the ability to implement inmate programs, which meets the type and style of facility being managed. This is accomplished and documented in each facility's policy and procedures manual, in conjunction with Division-wide policy and procedures found in the Custody Division Manual.

As mentioned before, security level is only one part of determining an inmate's housing location. Racial tensions are high in the custody environment, and demographics are crucial to maintaining order. Individual cases must also be considered, as there are times when two specific individuals should not be housed with each other, regardless of their security level designation.

F. Make individualize housing assignment determinations.

Response: As delineated above, the Los Angeles County jail system is comprised of seven different facilities, each with its own classification levels and infrastructure. It is our intent to allow each facility to continue to determine the configuration of their own housing matrix, based upon general guidelines set forth by IRC. The complete implementation of JIMS and Northpointe would provide the technology for every unit to accomplish this goal with central oversight by IRC.

## II. Security Administration

A. Inmate-to-staff ratios.

1. Increase staffing levels.

Response: Men's Central Jail (MCJ) has a current inmate-to-staff ratio of 10:1. While we are seeking additional staffing for reopening facilities, MCJ is the most cost-effective jail within the Los Angeles County system. We also agree that lower inmate-to-staff ratios would be beneficial to safety, security, and inmate programs; however, the suggested inmate to staff ratio of 4:1 is simply cost prohibitive. Under a 4:1 ratio model, we would need to hire 729 more deputies and 203 more custody assistants just for MCJ. While safety and security remain a top priority, fiscally, the Department is struggling to open closed bed spaces in an effort to elevate the inmate percentage release time. The purpose of the Title 15 Compliance Officer Program is to increase inmate safety and security. We feel this is a more cost-effective model, compared to the suggested 4:1 model.

### Inmate Movement

2. Establish and enforce policies governing inmate movement.

Response: Currently we are reviewing all policies related to inmate movement and classification. Proper implementation and supervision of current policy and future policy changes are paramount.

3. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology.

Response: RFID technology solution will allow precise tracking of inmate movement and alert staff of prohibited inmate movement, as in the case of Inmate Tinajero. Although the solution is costly, it will provide a tool for personnel to readily grant or deny access to areas based on classification and security levels. We are currently researching a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) grant that could provide up to \$500,000 to conduct a feasibility study to implement RFID in one of our facilities. This funding will be matched with \$535,000 from the Inmate Welfare Fund to provide RFID capabilities at Pitchess Detention Center - East Facility.

4. Fixed security cameras.

Response: We are implementing a pilot program at East Facility for the installation of security cameras. Evaluation of the pilot project will determine the feasibility of a system-wide installation. The installation of additional cameras at each of the remaining facilities would require additional funding.

5. Comprehensive security audit.

Response: Custody Support Services is currently researching the availability of a grant from NIJ for a security audit. Recently we requested the implementation of two sergeant audit teams to evaluate risk management issues, such as security and Title 15 compliance; however, the CAO removed this funding request from our Master Plan Proposal.

Title 15 Safety Checks

6. Fixed surveillance cameras in IRC holding cells.

Response: As stated above, we have implemented a pilot program at East Facility for the installation of security cameras. We are working toward a successful pilot project that can be expanded throughout most, if not all, of the Correctional Services and Custody Operations Divisions' facilities. Of course, the installation of additional cameras would require additional funding.

7. Safety check accountability.

Response: Sergeants at each facility are aware of their responsibility to inspect subordinates' work. It is incumbent upon

supervisory personnel to consistently inspect the work of line staff. New policies and procedures have been implemented to rectify past problems.

8. Safety check quality.

Response: Men's Central Jail Unit Orders state that personnel shall conduct thorough safety and security checks and take all necessary steps to complete these checks effectively. These checks are now clearly documented in the Daily Activity Logs, assigned to each module/dorm.

9. Supervisory presence.

Response: As stated above, sergeants at each facility are aware of their responsibility to inspect subordinates' work. They have been directed to maintain a high level of visibility. It is incumbent upon supervisory personnel to consistently inspect the work of line staff. These inspections are also documented in the Daily Activity Logs.

10. Increase custody staff presence on the rows.

Response: We are committed to inmate safety and security, as well as increasing staff. Currently your Board has prioritized the increase of percentage release time served as the top priority. Any new staff will be assigned to the reopening of existing facilities. Most recently, we implemented the Title 15 Compliance Officer Program, which dedicated staff to ensuring the safety and security of all inmates. Additionally, these staff members are responsible for ensuring the total compliance of Title 15 throughout their respective facilities.

B. Inmate workers.

1. Create and enforce a uniform policy for inmate worker selection.

Response: As a result of the inmate homicides, we have created the Inmate Movement Prisoner Accountability Classification Task Force (IMPACT). The IMPACT committee's mission is to review classification and housing issues in an effort to improve policy and procedure. On November 4, 2004, we implemented Custody Division Manual (CDM) Directive 04-002, Inmate Uniforms. This policy will update CDM section 5-01/015.00, regarding inmate uniforms. This policy simplifies the color combinations for various inmate classifications or categories.

2. Classification and housing bureau should be responsible for inmate worker eligibility determinations.

Response: The IMPACT committee has made several recommendations for the selection requirements of inmate workers; this revision also includes housing and inmate worker selection (CDM Section 5-01/025.00).

C. Housing area searches.

1. Continued emphasis on searches.

Response: We recently submitted a plan for the reopening of all closed housing areas and enhancements to the jail safety and security. Two of the programs requested in the plan were dedicated search teams and the expansion of the Title 15 Compliance teams. Both of these programs were eliminated from the Chief Administrative Office's proposal to your Board. However, each facility, specifically Men's Central Jail, have developed housing search plans to ensure a systematic approach is taken to search all housing areas. Funding for the two dedicated search teams would greatly enhance that mission.

D. Inmate-on-inmate violence.

1. Track and monitor statistics.

Response: The Facility Automated Statistical Tracking (FAST) system implemented a new module in July 2004 for tracking inmate vs. inmate assaults. As of this writing, the review of this system did not render enough data to provide a meaningful analysis.

2. Increase staff presence.

Response: We intend to open additional housing areas as the funds become available. This will begin with the Board's allocation of the \$24.4 million and the graduation of the March 2005 Academy Class. The increased staffing at the existing housing areas is certainly welcomed and would definitely enhance safety and security in the jails; however, it is cost-prohibitive according to the CAO.